

# WHAT IS HINDUISM?

BY

D S SARMA, M.A.,

*Sometimes Principal, Government Arts College Rajahmundry  
and sometimes Principal Pachayappa's College Madras*

"It must be the daily prayer of every adherent of the Hindu faith that every known religion of the world should grow from day to day and should serve the whole of humanity"

MAHATMA GANDHI

*New Delhi, March 18, 1939*

THIRD EDITION

THE MADRAS LAW JOURNAL PRESS, MYLAPORE  
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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION (1939)

This book is intended as a text book for College classes. It gives a bare outline of liberal non-sectarian Hinduism. And I venture to think it is orthodox in the highest sense of the term. A considerable part of the material used in it is taken from my *Primer of Hinduism* with the kind permission of the publishers—Messrs Macmillan & Co. The present book, besides changing the original dialogue form of the *Primer* into the narrative form gives additional chapters on comparative religion and Hindu rituals and additional sections on the Caste System, the Tāntric Sadhanā and the philosophy of Śaiva Siddhānta. Also in many places the matter taken from the *Primer* has been either compressed or completely revised. In fact this is almost a new book intended for College classes while the *Primer* was intended for High School classes. I hope all the Hindu Colleges which make an attempt to teach religion will give it a fair trial. I also hope that even the general reader will find in it a useful compendium of the essentials of Hinduism.

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## TRANSLITERATION

The points to be noted in the scheme of transliteration adopted here for Sanskrit words are —

- 1 All vowels with a dash above should be pronounced long
- 2 *e* and *o* should always be pronounced long as in *māde* and *mōde* respectively
- 3 *ih* denotes the *anusvāra* and *h* the *visarga*
- 4 *kh gh* etc. denote the aspirated varieties of *k g*, etc
- 5 *c* has more or less the sound of *ch* in *chin*
6. *t*  *t* in *ten*
- 7 *d* , , *d* in *den*.
- 8 *t* " " *th* in *thin*
- 9 *d* , , *th* in *then*
- 10 *ñ* , " *ng* in *sing*
- 11 *ṣ* "  *n* in *singe*
12. *r* , " *ri* in *rishi*
- 13 *ṣ* , " *sh* in *ship*
- 14 *ś* " " *sh* in *Shankara*
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## CHAPTER I—INTRODUCTION

Religion is the highest need of human nature. Just as our bodies require food for their sustenance and our minds require knowledge for their expansion so do our souls require religious experience for their perfection. It is the spiritual hunger of men that has driven them in every age and country to seek for God and sometimes find Him. God is our eternal quest. And it is God Himself that prompts the quest. For without His creative activity in our hearts we should never think of seeking Him. Religion is therefore essentially supernatural. It comes from above and not from below. No purely human effort can ever establish a religion.

At the same time the trappings of every religion are human. The revelation of God comes through human channels. God no doubt, remains the same for ever. There can never be any change in His eternal Being. But our ideas of Him may change from age to age. As mankind grows in knowledge and experience, its conception of God becomes nobler and purer. A civilized man has certainly a more exalted conception of God than a

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its spelling may be irrational. If its syntax is logical its powers of word formation may be limited. Similarly every religion has its weak points as well as its strong points. If its conception of God is profound its powers of organization may be weak. If its moral teaching is high and noble, some of its forms of worship may be unsatisfactory. A perfect religion like a perfect language, is only an ideal. So it is a mistake to suppose that one's own religion alone is a perfect revelation of God and that all other religions are the mere creations of priests just as it would be a mistake to think that one's own mother tongue is a perfect means of expression and that all other languages are mere meaningless sounds.

Our attitude to the various religions of the world should therefore, be the same as our attitude to the various languages. We no doubt love and admire our own religion, as we love and admire our own mother tongue. Both of them come to us in our childhood. They are part and parcel of our being. Their roots are entwined round our hearts. They are bound to us with a thousand sacred memories. Nothing short of violence which may end in our spiritual death, can tear us away from them. But love of our own religion should never result in hatred of other religions. On the other hand it is our duty to approach in a spirit of reverence and sympathy the other religions that we find in our

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attempts have been not infrequently made for political and social purposes to combine the various religions of a land into one common religion, but they have all failed. In this country we are all familiar with the attempts of Akbar to found a new religion for his empire. The instinct of Aśoka was surer in this matter. For in one of his pillar edicts he says —

I devote my attention to all communities because all sects are revered by me with various forms of reverence. Nevertheless personal adherence to one's own creed is the chief thing in my opinion.

But Aśoka was only echoing the opinions expressed by the divine author of the Gītā —

Howsoever men approach me, even so do I accept them for on all sides whatever path they may choose is mine, O Arjuna.

‘Better one's own Dharma, though imperfect than the Dharma of another which is perfectly carried out. Better death in going by one's own Dharma the Dharma of another is fraught with fear.’

A synthesis of religions is possible only when there is agreement on their essentials just as a standard language is possible only among the related dialects and not among languages that differ totally from one another.

## II

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priests form its body. The soul cannot function without the body. Therefore organization in religion which results in the formulation of doctrines, the institution of ceremonies and the establishment of a priesthood is essential. The function of institutional religion is to help people to put into practice the teachings of the original founders. As long as an institutional religion is faithful to the inspired religion of the original founders, it serves a very useful purpose, but when it departs from the spirit of their teachings and assumes an independent importance, it becomes more a hindrance than a help.

### III

Religion is the response of the whole being of man to the call of God. It is the most comprehensive of all our activities. It is more comprehensive than poetry, art, science, politics, etc. In fact, religion, properly understood, is not a separate activity at all, but something which comprehends and transcends all our activities. Hence every part of our being has a place in it.

A man has, besides a body, a conscious mind with its three main aspects of will, emotion and reason, and behind it a vast sub-conscious or unconscious mind in which are stored away the innumerable past experiences of the individual and

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to possess its scale of moral values and its systems of moral discipline. There can be no religion without its own system of ethics. Again as our emotions largely determine our will there must be something in religion which operates directly on the emotions and leads them along the sacred channel of love to the infinite beauty of God. No great religion can ever exist without its patterns of prayer and meditation by means of which it directs the feelings and aspirations of the faithful towards heaven. And finally as man not only feels and wills but also understands and reasons there must be something in religion which satisfies his intellect and makes him understand unlike the other animals his position in the universe and his relations to the ultimate Reality which we call God. Thus every religion is bound to possess a philosophy of its own a body of doctrine arising out of secular knowledge, but going far beyond it and including in its scope not only the visible world outside man but also the invisible world inside him. Thus we arrive at the well known divisions of religion *viz* its rituals its ethics its forms of worship and its philosophy. It is only when all these four elements—traditional moral emotional and rational—receive due emphasis that we have a well balanced religion. The rituals appeal to the unconscious mind of man, the ethics to his will, the forms of worship to his emotions and

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To start with, we have the primitive religions in which there is a vague sense of the Divine Spirit all around, but no clear sense of moral or spiritual values. Fetishism totemism, animism and ancestor worship—all belong to the childhood of the race and are still practised by tribes who have not outgrown their spiritual infancy. After the awakening of the racial soul, comes the long process of purification in which the emerging ethical values are carefully conserved. This stage gives rise to the so-called ethical religions of the world—Taoism Southern Buddhism and Jainism. In these religions a code of ethics is all in all. Other religions also have their codes of ethics but they subordinate them to their faith in God. The next stage in the development of the racial soul is one of love and worship and it gives rise to the so-called theistical religions of the world all of which recognize a source of light and life between which and the aspiring soul an ethical and emotional relation is established. Zoroastrianism Judaism, Northern Buddhism, Vaisnavism Śaivism Śāktism Christianity and Islam—all belong to this stage. All of them regard God as a Personality whose qualities are revealed to the loving hearts of the worshippers either independently or through the medium of a prophet saviour, Avatar or Bodhisattva. Finally when loving worship is followed by an inner union,

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reason it is rather difficult to answer the question What is Hinduism? in a way which will do justice to all its varied beliefs and practices. However, an attempt will be made in the following chapters to give a short account of what is common to all the living faiths that make up Hinduism in their different aspects of rituals, ethics, systems of discipline and schools of philosophy. But, first of all we must briefly indicate in the next chapter what the authoritative sources of those faiths are.

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whole Veda is divided into —(1) Karma kanda (2) Upasanā kāṇḍa and (3) Jñāna kāṇḍa. The first deals with rituals, the second with worship or meditation and the third with the highest knowledge.

## II

Next in importance to the Śruti is the Smṛti which collectively means the secondary scriptures. These derive their authority from the Śruti, because their object is to expand and exemplify the principles of the Veda. They consist of (1) Smṛtis or codes of law (2) Itihasas or epics (3) Purāṇas or chronicles and legends (4) Āgamas or manuals of worship and (5) Darśanas or schools of philosophy.

The laws for regulating Hindu society from time to time are codified in the so-called Smṛtis. The most important of our law-givers are Manu, Yajñavalkya and Parāśara. They give detailed instructions according to the conditions of the time, to all classes of men regarding their duties in life. Hence their codes of laws are known as Dharma Śāstras. But most of these books are only of historical importance now. For Hindu society has naturally changed during all these intervening centuries and many new factors undreamt-of by the old law-givers have come into existence. Accordingly many of the old laws have become obsolete. Our society has outgrown them. It would be as

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discourses and sermons. The most important part of it is of course, the Bhagavad Gīta which is a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the battle-field before the commencement of the great war. The importance of the Gītā is due to its context as well as its contents. It forms as it were the focus of the whole epic. At the critical moment when Arjuna saw before him all his dear kinsmen ranged against him in battle he grew faint of heart and was tempted to relinquish a great public duty on account of his private sorrow. If he had been left alone he would have retired from the battle field, and if he had done so there would have been an end of the war and the evil embodied in Duryodhana and his allies would have triumphed. But this national calamity was averted by Kṛṣṇa who came to the rescue of Arjuna and discussed with him all the moral and metaphysical implications of human duties and convinced him that, in the circumstances in which he was placed it was his duty to fight regardless of consequences. Thus, incidentally, the Avatar summarizes for us all the philosophical and the ethical teachings of the Upaniṣads. In fact, there is a popular verse which aptly compares the Upaniṣads to cows, the Gītā to milk; Kṛṣṇa to a cowherd and Arjuna to a calf. Also the Gītā aims at producing a type of character which is the loftiest that the Hindu imagination

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found only in germ in the Brāhmanas, is fully developed in the epics and the Puranas. According to the generally received account there are ten Avatārs of Viṣṇu, the preserving Power of the universe. The aim of every Avatār is to save the world from some great danger or trouble. The Bhagavān of the Gīta in two well known verses describes the purpose of an Avatār thus —

‘ Whenever there is decay of Dhārma O Arjuna, and an outbreak of Adharma I embody myself. For the protection of the good for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of Dharmā I am born from age to age.

The ten incarnations of Viṣṇu are —

(1) Matsya (The Fish) (2) Kūrma (The Tortoise), (3) Varāha (The Boar) (4) Nārasimha (The Man lion) (5) Vamana (The Dwarf), (6) Paraśurāma (Rāma with the axe), (7) Rāmacandra (The hero of the Rāmāyana), (8) Śrī Kṛṣṇa (The Bhagavān of the Gīta) (9) Buddha (The founder of Buddhism) (10) Kalki (The hero on a white horse who is to come at the end of the Kali Yuga)

The object of the first Avatār, the Fish, was to save Vāivasvata Manu, the progenitor of the human race, from destruction by a deluge which threatened the existence of the earth. The object of the second Avatār, the Tortoise was to enable the world to recover some things of value which had

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curiously enough, is the founder of Buddhism whom the orthodox Hindu writers at first looked upon as a heretic. But recognizing the power of Buddha as a religious teacher especially his prohibition of animal sacrifices and his kindness to all living beings, they adopted him as their own and explained away in a curious manner his unorthodox doctrines. They said that Viṣṇu appeared as Buddha to encourage the wicked men to despise the Vedas, to reject caste and to deny the existence of the gods and thus bring about their own destruction. The object of the tenth Avatār, Kalki, which is yet to come is like that of the others the destruction of the wicked and the re-establishment of virtue.

Sometimes the number of Avatārs is said to be twenty or twenty two. And the Bhāgavata Purāṇa says —

The incarnations of Viṣṇu are innumerable like the streams flowing from an inexhaustible lake."

From the account of the Avatārs given above, it will be seen that some of them are purely mythological some quasi-historical and some historical, and one is purely prophetic. Also it will be seen that there is nothing exclusive about the Hindu doctrine of incarnation, as there is about the Christian doctrine. To the Hindu imagination the whole world is an incarnation of the divine idea. It is only when God is supposed to come

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Another class of popular scriptures consists of the so-called Āgamas. This word is used in a narrow sense to denote the sectarian scriptures dealing with the worship of a particular aspect of God and prescribing detailed courses of discipline for the worshipper. According as the deity that is worshipped is Viṣṇu or Śiva or Śakti the Āgamas are divided into three classes, which have given rise to the three main branches of Hinduism namely, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Śāktism. The Vaiṣṇava Āgamas or Pañcarātra Āgamas glorify God as Viṣṇu. The Śaiva Āgamas glorify Him as Śiva and have given rise to an important school of philosophy known as Śaiva Siddhānta. And the Śākta Āgamas or Tantras glorify the Supreme as the Mother of the universe under one of the many names of Devī. It should be remembered that, in spite of their immense diversity in forms and methods of worship, the Āgamas are all Vedic in spirit and character, and hence are looked upon as

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Of these six schools of philosophy only one still holds the field of orthodoxy and that is the Vedānta. It is considered the most satisfactory system of philosophy that could be evolved out of the Upaniṣads. For it has a right conception of the relative importance of the various parts of the Veda as well as of the supremacy of the Vedic revelation. The first four Darśanas namely, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya and Yoga though in theory they accept the Veda as the supreme authority, have nevertheless many doctrines which are opposed to its teachings. They rely too much on human reason. Our reason working on the materials given to us by our senses is all right in matters of worldly knowledge. But it is a very inadequate instrument in matters that lie beyond this world. Therefore to understand the nature of God and our relations to Him we have to supplement the testimony of the senses and reason by something else. And this is the testimony of the Veda, which is a record of the religious experience of great Rṣis, who by their spiritual intuition have gone beyond time and space and grasped the nature of the ultimate Reality, which they call Brahman. We have first of all to

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And, just as all our scriptures have a common source, they have a common aim. Their aim is to make man a perfect spirit like God and one with Him. With that aim in view they try to create political and social institutions which will help the spiritual development of every man according to his capacity. They rouse his imagination, they quicken his intellect and form his character and thus guide him along the steep and difficult path of ascent that leads to God.



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Ritualism has a historical function as well as a social function. It binds together not only the different units of society during a generation, but also the different generations of a race. It binds the present with the past and secures a visible continuity for religion. Take, for instance, the injunction that every pious Hindu once in his life should visit Benares and bathe in the holy Ganges and perform a Śrāddha at Gayā and go to Rāmeśvaram to complete his pilgrimage or the injunction that a pious Buddhist should once in his life visit the Holy Land and see the four sacred spots where Buddha was born, where he was illumined, where he taught his first sermon and where he attained Nirvāṇa. Countless generations of Hindus and Buddhists have undertaken this pilgrimage. And so we can imagine what great historical associations are conjured up in the mind of a pilgrim when he visits these famous places. Thus many an ancient rite becomes worth preserving if only for the sake

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Closely connected with this psychological function is the aesthetic function Ritual satisfies not only our craving for the expression of the religious emotion but also our sense of the beautiful In all ages and all countries ritual and art have been closely connected together, as in the great temples of Southern India, the mosques in Agra and Delhi and the cathedrals of Europe Beautiful places of worship, sacred vessels and vestments connected with ritualism satisfy the aesthetic needs of the congregation and are accordingly encouraged by all great historical religions

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prepares the ground, creates the atmosphere, suggests the mood and predisposes the mind, so that the religious soul may easily detach itself from the world and feel the mysterious presence of God. That is why, though God is everywhere and understands every language, we prefer to go to a temple to worship Him—the more ancient the better—and say our prayers in ancient Sanskrit

Thus ritualism has very important subjective as well as objective functions—social, historical, symbolical, psychological, aesthetic, moral and mystical—which short-sighted Puritanism will do well to consider carefully before it launches its attack. Families and communities which neglect the forms of institutional religion are likely to lose their religious spirit in a generation or two and thus expose themselves to worldliness and scepticism. A well-established ritualism is like a fort which protects a religious community from all disintegrating forces from without. Even a soulless ritualism goes a great way in warding off the attacks of an aggressive alien religion. The havoc committed by the enemies of Hinduism in its days of decline in this country would have been far greater, if its deep-set phalanx of rites and ceremonies, of temples and priests, of pilgrimages and processions, had not afforded it protection

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Ritualism tends to make religion not only mechanical, but also static. When belief changes, ritual also should change along with it. Just as in a progressive language spelling should follow pronunciation, and the written idiom should follow the spoken idiom, though at some distance, so in a progressive religion ritual should follow faith. There should be no yawning gulf between the two. The English spelling is notoriously obsolete and irrational. For the printing press more or less fixed the spelling in the fifteenth century according to the pronunciation of that time. In the succeeding centuries the pronunciation of the people has moved on, but the spelling has remained mostly where it was. Similarly, our ritual was more or less fixed some centuries before the Christian era by our priesthood according to the faith of those times. In some respects the faith has moved on, but the ritual remains where it was. For instance, modern science and explorations have given us more correct ideas of the universe around us as well as of the history and geography of our own

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Lastly, ritualism with its great insistence on form is likely in modern times to stand in the way of recognition of the unity of all religions. In the present century, as explained in the introductory chapter, a systematic study of the lives of the mystics and saints of all religions has convinced us that underneath every religion there lies like a steel frame, the common mystic path or the path of spiritual development. The experience of every mystic passes through more or less the same stages, encounters the same difficulties and reaches the same goal. The mystic path is generally divided into three parts—purification, illumination and union—corresponding to our Karma, Bhakti and Jñāna. Every religion undertakes to give advice and guidance along this path. In the first stage we are required to cultivate virtues and purify ourselves by leading a spotless moral life and faithfully discharging our duties. Every religion teaches this, but every religion has its own list of cardinal virtues which determine its individual character. It is all a question of emphasis here. Similarly, in the second stage every religion insists on the worship of a Divine Form which fills the worshipper's mind with its luminous presence. It is all a question of form here. In the third stage

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According to the Hindu view the ultimate object of ritualistic worship is the realization of God. It is to be achieved by the gradual transformation of the worshipper into the likeness of the worshipped Deity or Devatā. The first step in this direction is taken when the mind is made to dwell on some concrete form representing the Devatā and thus overcome its inherent tendency towards distraction. For this purpose an image of the Devatā is taken and worshipped. Images are of three kinds — (1) Pratīka or a representative image either in the round or on a flat surface, (2) Linga or an emblematic object and (3) Yantra or a diagrammatic representation. In the simplest form of worship, the worshipper treats the Deity as an honoured

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It is the Devatā Himself or Herself. And so, when a mantra is repeated with concentration of mind and the worshipper makes an effort to identify himself with the worshipped, the power of the Devatā comes to his help. Human power is thus supplemented by the divine power. A prayer is different from the repetition of a mantra. It is a purely human effort. Prayers may be offered in any language and in any form. But a mantra, being an embodiment of a Devatā in sound, has to be repeated in that form alone in which it first revealed itself to the mind of a Rsi. It is not to be learnt from books, but from the living voice of a Guru who gives the Upadeśa or initiation. And it has for its aim the gradual transformation of the worshipper into the likeness of the worshipped. Therefore the more a worshipper advances in his japa the less is he himself and the more does he partake of the nature and wield the powers of the Devatā. That is why the Gītā says that of all yajñas (sacrifices) japa-yajña is the highest. In other yajñas a man sacrifices something else, but in japa-yajña he sacrifices his own self and becomes the self of the Devatā whom he worships.

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All Hindu rites may be divided into four classes —

- (1) Those pertaining to the stages of life,
- (2) Those pertaining to times and seasons,
- (3) Those pertaining to public worship, and
- (4) Those pertaining to special occasions

(1) The rites pertaining to the stages of man's life are generally known as Samskāras. We have the Samskāras of childhood, of boyhood, of manhood, and of old age and death. The rites of childhood are (a) Jātakarma which is performed immediately after the birth of the child, (b) Nāmakarana when he is given a name, (c) Annaprāśana when he is given solid food, and (d) Vidyārambha when he is taught the alphabet. The most important ceremony which marks the beginning of the next stage of life is Upanayana. The word Upanayana means bringing near, *i e*, bringing the

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(11) During the month we have regularly (1) The Ekādaśī fast on the eleventh day of each fortnight and (2) the Pitr-tarpana or libations of water to the spirits of one's ancestors on the new moon day.

(111) During the Hindu religious year we have the following observances —

<i>Month</i>	<i>Observance.</i>	<i>Significance</i>
1 Caitra	Śrī Rāmanavamī	The birth of Rāma
2 Vaiśākha	Narasimha Jayanti	The manifestation of Narasimha
3 Jyestha	Gangotsava	The worship of the holy Ganges
4 Asādhā	Vyāsa Pūjā	The worship of the Guru
5 Śrāvana	{ Upākarma	The renewal of Vedic studies
	{ Kṛsnāstamī	The birth of Kṛsna

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shippers In the fivefold worship two more items are added, namely, Gandha or the offering of sandal paste and Puspa or the offering of flowers These two kinds of worship are for brief occasions only Whereas the sixteenfold worship is the normal worship on all ordinary occasions This consists of —

- (1) Dhyānam=meditation
- (2) Āvāhanam=invocation
- (3) Simhāsanam=enthronement
- (4) Pādyam=washing the feet
- (5) Argghyam=offering hospitality
- (6) Snānam=ablution
- (7) Vastram=presenting vestments
- (8) Yajñopavītam=investing with the  
sacrificial thread
- (9) Candanam=offering sandal paste
- (10) Puspa=offering flowers
- (11) Dhūpa=burning incense
- (12) Deepa=lighting the lamp
- (13) Naivedyam=offering food
- (14) Tāmbūlam=offering betel
- (15) Nīrājanā=waving lights
- (16) Suvarnapuspa=making a gift of gold  
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It will be seen from this list that the worship consists in treating the Deity like an honoured guest of the highest class In more celebrated forms of

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It will be seen from this list that the worship consists in treating the Deity like an honoured guest of the highest class In more celebrated forms of



like the various kinds of yajñas described in the Kaṁma-kānda of the Veda. The last are performed for gaining certain ends like the birth of a son or happiness in heaven. The Āgāmic rites are connected (1) with the worship of the images of gods, either in private homes or in public temples, and (2) with the observance of the fasts and feasts of the Hindu religious year. The Vedic rites are generally of the nature of Yajña or sacrifice, whereas the Āgāmic rites are generally of the nature of Pūjā or worship. The sublimation of Yajña is Yoga. By sacrifice we gain fellowship or union. He who sacrifices his lower self which is attached to earthly things realizes his higher self which is the Self of all beings. The sublimation of Pūjā is Upāsanā or meditation which may begin with petition but ends in communion with God. The Vedic rites and the Āgāmic rites which have thus the same end in view show in an unmistakable manner the confluence in Hinduism of the two great streams of culture, Aryan and Dravidian. For it should not be forgotten that Hinduism is as much Dravidian as Aryan. It is the result of the fusion of two great races and cultures.

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Closely parallel to the function of ritualism in religion is the function of mythology. What we said above about the merits and demerits of ritua-

speak of Indian or Babylonian or Egyptian or Græco-Roman or Norse mythology. Or it may mean the science which examines the myths of a nation and tries to find out their origin and significance. In this sense we speak of the science of mythology and also of comparative mythology. The science of mythology has been studied in modern times by a band of disinterested scholars, who have been considerably helped in their studies by the sister sciences of comparative philology, archæology and anthropology. It is now believed that the myths of a race were originally the outcome of primitive human thought and language. To the primitive man his mythology was his history, his science, his philosophy and his religion—all in one. It was the glorification of the heroes of his race. It was the explanation of the natural phenomena he witnessed in the universe, such as the eclipses of the sun and the moon, the formation of the clouds and the ripening of corn. It was his speculation of what happened to man after death. It was also his expression of the gratitude he felt when he succeeded in killing his foe or in securing his food. In fact, mythology is the raw material out of which are fashioned later those finished products which we call history, science, philosophy and religion.

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Very early in the history of a race the need is felt for an examination and selection of its myths.

Thus mythology becomes part of popular religion. But it is only a secondary part. For we should never forget that mythology is not religion. It is only an instrument of religion. When the religion of a race consists of nothing else but the adventures of its gods and goddesses, it soon perishes. That is what has happened, for instance, to Graeco-Roman and Norse religions. They perished when Christianity began to spread. But in Hinduism mythology is wisely kept in the circumference. The centre is occupied by genuine religious thought and experience and not by popular or poetic fancies or by miracle and legend. Hindu religious philosophy simply utilizes the traditional stories for popular teaching. It utilizes, for instance, the several forms of the Divine to which the national imagination has clung for ages as stepping-stones to the highest Reality. The Āvatar of the Bhagavad Gītā makes this point very clear. He says —

“ Whatever may be the form which each devotee seeks to worship with faith—in that form alone do I make his faith steadfast

“ Possessed of faith, he worships that form, and his desires are fulfilled, granted, in fact, by me alone

“ But finite is the result gained by these men of small minds. Those who sacrifice to the gods go to the gods, those who worship me come to me

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charioteer of men—or his Saraswatī, the goddess of learning, or Laksmī the goddess of prosperity, or Umā, the goddess of purity, the purity of the mountain air and of the eternal snows of the Himālayas. The forms are numberless. The impersonal absolute spirit, called Brahman in the Upānisads, is thus presented to us in the forms of these attractive personalities in our epics and Purāṇas. And there is perfect freedom of thought and worship granted to us. It is these divinities, high and low, installed in our hearts and in our temples that spread their glory all around—the glory of the one true God—and keep the religion of the Hindus ever in light, ever in life. In their hands lies the secret of our strength—strength which consists not in mere unity, but unity in variety. They have brought philosophy from its giddy heights to the home and heart of even the lowest peasant in the villages of India and made him feel the beauty of holiness. Through song and legend, through fasts and festivals, they have taught him to admire, even when he cannot actually possess, the cardinal Hindu virtues of purity and self-control, renunciation and truth and, above all, that supreme Hindu virtue of non-violence. That is why Hindu society as a whole despises, though it may not be able to resist, those nations who are prone to sensuality and drunkenness, to greed and violence.

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## CHAPTER IV—HINDU ETHICS

In the preceding chapter we discussed the question of Hindu rituals. Let us now go a step higher and consider the question of Hindu ethics. Both rituals and morals are comprised in the word karma. The former may be called the lower karma and the latter the higher karma. As I have already said, they are the lower and the higher limbs of religion. If rituals are the legs, morals are the hands. We are enjoined not only to perform certain ceremonies, but also to discharge certain duties and to cultivate certain virtues. We are slowly to proceed from the outer to the inner—from ritualistic action to moral action, and from moral action to moral character, calling forth more and more of our will into operation. And when the will comes into operation it is free to ask the question—Why should I do this and not that?—or more generally—Why should I lead a moral life? The ultimate question in ethics is—What is the aim of morality, what are its sanctions?

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According to this vision of the universe, the Hindu sages looked upon all progress in human history as an aspect of the progress they saw in the order of creation. That is, it has to be judged by the degree of the predominance of spirit over matter. All civilizations have, therefore, to be estimated according to a scale of spiritual values. The writers of our Purāṇas picturesquely describe the different ages of the world according as the Cow of Dharma or righteousness walked on four legs or three or two or one. The authors of our epics were not carried away by the splendour, wealth and power and the scientific efficiency of civilizations, such as those of Rāvana and Duryodhana. The true progress of nations, according to their standard, is moral and spiritual progress, a step in the direction of God and not in the reverse direction of the brute and the monster. That was the lesson they wanted to impress on the imagination of India by their wonderful stories of Rāma and Rāvana, of Yudhisthira and Duryodhana.

Furthermore, the Hindu sages tried to project these lines of progress that they saw in Nature and the history of nations into an ideal scheme of society and an ideal pattern of individual life, and constructed that mighty edifice of law which goes by

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Indian sages who tried to organize Hindu society on the basis of Varṇāśrama dharma was to make the whole nation a joint family such as that of the Pāṇḍava brothers headed by Yudhiṣṭhira. The lineal descendant of those great Rsis, Mahātmā Gāndhī, writes today:—

“In this conception of Varna there is absolutely no idea of superiority and inferiority. If I again interpret the Hindu spirit rightly, all life is absolutely equal and one. It is therefore an arrogant assumption on the part of a Brāhman when he says, ‘I am superior to the other three Varnas.’ This is not what the Brāhmanas of old said. They commanded homage not because they claimed superiority, but because they claimed the right of service through and through without the slightest expectation of reward. The priests who today arrogate to themselves the function of the Brāhman and distort religion are no custodians of Hinduism or Brāhmanism. Consciously or unconsciously, they are laying the axe at the root of the tree on which they are sitting, and when they tell you that Śāstras enjoin untouchability and when they talk of pollution distance, I have no hesitation in saying that they are belying their creed and that they are misunderstanding the spirit of Hinduism.”

The theory of Varṇāśrama dharma based on the Hindu metaphysics takes into account both the unity and the variety of human beings. Spiritually we are all one, for the same divine spark is in all of us. But we have varied gifts and aptitudes. Though all men have the same kind of bodies with the same set of limbs and the same set of senses,

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and technical skill and hence fluid, and all working towards the same end—the good of the commonwealth

## II

We will now proceed to give a historical outline of the Indian Caste System which is supposed to put into practice the theory of Varnāśrama dharma, but which has become in reality a negation of it.

There seems to be little doubt that in its early stages the Hindu social system had some points of resemblance to the Greek and Roman social systems. Just as the so-called Indo-Germanic tribes had a common parent language which developed on different lines in different lands which they came to occupy after their dispersion, so apparently they had common social institutions which developed in different ways in the different kinds of environment in which their lot was cast. The ancestors of the ancient Greeks and Romans reached Greece and Italy and created the City-State, while their kinsmen who reached India created the Caste System. The seed was common, and in different soils gave rise to different growths. The more or less common rules regarding marriages and religious repasts observed in the Aryan family, tribe and clan were subjected to different influences in the different lands to which the Aryan tribes penetrated.

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Modern scholars are of opinion that the Rājput and the Gūrjara kingdoms that established themselves in mediaeval India were the result of foreign invasions. The conquering races were Hinduized and assimilated to the old Ksatriya caste.

Apart from invasions, wars and conquests the normal civic life of the people and their daily occupations, in course of centuries, cut across all racial and class divisions and produced the powerful trade guilds of Buddhist India, which must have given a strong impetus to the formation of innumerable hereditary occupational castes with which the Indian social system is honey-combed even to the present day. Originally even the Brāhmins and the Ksatriyas were only occupational castes, which in course of time became hereditary and exclusive. And their example must have been copied below by the bulk of the population.

Again, in religious schisms and the formation of sects we have another force cutting across class divisions and eventually producing new groups, which in their turn by exclusive marriage laws developed into sub-castes. During the changing fortunes of Buddhism and Jainism and the ultimate victory of Hinduism and the formation of Vaisnava, Śaiva and Śākta sects a considerable intermingling of castes must have taken place in the social system, especially in the lower strata.

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in whom Sattva or purity predominated were supposed to form the first caste, those in whom Rajas or energy predominated formed the second caste and those in whom Tamas or ignorance predominated in varying degrees formed the third and fourth castes. Furthermore, the four castes were adduced as part of the evidence of the inviolable law of Karma, the good actions of a man in this life earning for him promotion to a higher caste in the next life. Thus on all sides the ideal society was rounded off and its various parts were supposed to work into one another with beautiful harmony, and no one doubted its validity as long as India was shut off from the other parts of the world.

The simple artificial diagram of four classes drawn in accordance with the principle of Varnāśrama was, of course, very different from the bewildering complexity of innumerable castes and sub-castes with their rigid walls of exclusion, which existed in every age known to history and whose existence had to be acknowledged and accounted for by our later law-givers. However, the diagram was indelibly impressed on the national imagination by Hindu writers, and it must be said that it served a great political purpose. During all the centuries when a strong central government was either non-existent in the country or was frequently changing hands it was the theocratic ideal of the caste system

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#### IV

The fact of the matter is, as Dr Ānanda Coomāraswāmy puts it, a perfection that has been is not the perfection for us. Wisdom lies in our striving after a new kind of perfection in a new set of circumstances. The caste system has had its day. In its present form it is bound to disappear, as the Holy Roman empire has disappeared, and as the theocracies of Israel and Islam have disappeared, as, in fact, all incarnations of any eternal principle are bound to disappear after a time. India is no longer an isolated country, and Hinduism has to reckon with the presence of two powerful rival religions in her own home. And the great social injustice which kept a large part of the Hindu

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by his habits of attention, obedience and reverence please him and get the best out of him. This is a period of probation, not of action. After the probation is over, the student has to marry and settle down as a householder and faithfully discharge his duties to his community and his country. By glorifying the householder and sanctioning his pursuit of wealth (Artha) and pleasure (Kāma) within the limits of the moral law (Dharma), Hinduism does justice to the flesh as well as to the spirit of man. It lays down no impossible rules of ascetic discipline for normal human beings. It recommends, on the other hand, a gradual and progressive conquest of spirit over flesh. After the period of active life is over and after all duties are discharged, the householder should retire, preferably to a country place, and begin to meditate in solitude on the higher things of the spirit. He is now free from social bonds and can easily take a detached view of all social and religious problems. This is his second period of probation. Just as Brahmacharya was a preparation for the life of the householder, Vānaprastha āśrama is a preparation for the final stage of Samnyāsa. When a man becomes a Samnyāsin, he renounces all possessions, all distinctions of caste, all rites and ceremonies and all attachments to any particular country, nation and religion. Looking upon all beings alike as parts of

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has to be observed by all irrespective of caste or age. Varnāśrama dharma is the changing wave, but Śāśvata dharma is the deep, silent sea beneath

## VI

Almost all virtues known to man come within the province of every religion. But each religion emphasizes only a few of them, calls them cardinal virtues and tries to bring all other virtues under one or other of them. It is these cardinal virtues emphasized by a religion that determine its individuality. The cardinal virtues of Hinduism are amply indicated in the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana and the Puranas. They are exemplified in the ideal characters which all Hindus love and venerate. Not only that, they are common to Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. The reason is not far to seek. Buddhism and Jainism were never regarded in India as separate from Hinduism. The Buddhist and Jain sects were always looked upon as the dissident sects of Hinduism. Therefore the cardinal virtues of Hinduism may be regarded as the distinctive marks of the religious spirit in India. They are—purity (Śaucam), self-control (Samyama), detachment (Asanga or Vairāgya), truth (Satyam) and non-violence (Ahimsā). Let us now consider the scope of each of these as conceived by the Hindu sages.

has to be observed by all irrespective of caste or age. Varnāśrama dharma is the changing wave, but Śāśvata dharma is the deep, silent sea beneath

## VI

Almost all virtues known to man come within the province of every religion. But each religion emphasizes only a few of them, calls them cardinal virtues and tries to bring all other virtues under one or other of them. It is these cardinal virtues emphasized by a religion that determine its individuality. The cardinal virtues of Hinduism are amply indicated in the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana and the Puranas. They are exemplified in the ideal characters which all Hindus love and venerate. Not only that, they are common to Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. The reason is not far to seek. Buddhism and Jainism were never regarded in India as separate from Hinduism. The Buddhist and Jain sects were always looked upon as the dissident sects of Hinduism. Therefore the cardinal virtues of Hinduism may be regarded as the distinctive marks of the religious spirit in India. They are—purity (Śaucam), self-control (Samyama), detachment (Asanga or Vairāgya), truth (Satyam) and non-violence (Ahimsā). Let us now consider the scope of each of these as conceived by the Hindu sages.

mind are more subtle than the sins of the flesh. To the latter class belong gluttony, drunkenness and sensuality of all kinds. These sins bear their condemnation on their very faces. Their beastly nature is easily recognized. But the sins of the mind put on the guise of virtue before they attack us. Hypocrisy, pride and bigotry are easily mistaken for virtues. Generally the masses in our country are a prey to the sins of the flesh, and our classes are a prey to the sins of the mind. Self-control means the control of both body and mind. The Gītā points out how desire has for its seat the senses, the mind and the understanding. The enemy has to be fought on all these ascending levels before he is vanquished. Self-control, therefore, implies, like purity, a whole group of virtues. It implies patience, forbearance, modesty, humility, self-sacrifice and self-effacement. When a man has acquired all the virtues which are grouped under these two cardinal virtues of purity and self-control, he becomes, in the language of the Gītā, a *Viśuddhātmā* and a *Vijitātma*, that is, one who has purified himself and also conquered himself.

But self-conquest is not glorified by Hinduism for its own sake. It is glorified for the sake of the ultimate liberation of the spirit from the thralldom of the body and the mind. Self-conquest, when it is made an end in itself, becomes mere asceticism.

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affections, for instance, our family ties, our love of home and friends are all good in themselves, but as long as we are blindly attached to these earthly things we are only on the lower rungs of the spiritual ladder. Naturally these attachments are very strong in early life. But the first shock of death opens our eyes to the ephemeral nature of these ties. We then begin to understand the conditions of our tenure on earth. We begin to reflect on the fact that in this world we are all creatures of time. We and the objects of our love are only like pieces of wood that drift together for a time on the ocean flood and then part for ever. Love, affection and friendship are, indeed, divine qualities, and the more we cherish them in our hearts the nearer are we to God. But the way to cherish them is not to be blindly attached to the particular objects of those feelings. The pure love that our hearts learn in the family circle should be gradually extended. A Samnyāsin is on a higher level than a householder because he has extended his love to all and looks upon the whole world as his family. In one of the Upanisads occurs this famous discourse of Yājñavalkya to his wife Maitreyī on the eve of his retirement to the forest —

“Verily, my dear, it is not for the love of the husband that the husband is dear, but it is for the love of the Ātman that the husband is dear. Verily, my dear, it is not for the love of the wife that the wife is dear, but for the

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inises they made show the high place given to truth by the Hindu sages. They say that there is no duty higher than truth, and no sin more dreadful than untruth. But when they speak of all virtues being only forms of truth or of all righteousness being rooted in truth, they mean by truth something more than truth-speaking. God is the highest Reality. He is the source of all eternal values like righteousness, justice, truth and beauty. Therefore Satyam means Eternal Being or what is true in knowledge, what is right in conduct and what is just and fair in social relations. It is a virtue that opens the door to infinite progress in science, in art, in social justice and morality. The contemplation of truth swiftly takes us away from our little systems of ethics and philosophy. Hindu scriptures teach us that the pursuit of truth, wherever it may lead and whatever sacrifices it may involve, is indispensable to the progress of man. Hence Hinduism has never opposed scientific progress. It has never opposed speculation in metaphysics or ethics. It has admitted that in every age our metaphysical systems and our ethical codes are only partial expressions of the highest Reality revealed to us in the Veda. With reference to that Reality our systems and codes may be modified and extended indefinitely. For who can prescribe limits to the progress of the human spirit? What was deemed



blow and develop the measure of anger required for the purpose. We pretend to believe that retaliation is the law of our being, whereas in every scripture we find that retaliation is nowhere obligatory but only permissible. It is restraint that is obligatory. Retaliation is indulgence requiring elaborate regulating. Restraint is the law of our being. For the highest perfection is unattainable without the highest restraint. Suffering is thus the badge of the human tribe."

The Hindu sages who preach non-violence recognize at the same time that perfect Ahimsā is only an ideal. It is like a straight line in geometry. We can only make an approximation to it in practice. For instance, all creatures get their food only by violence. Some kill animal life and some vegetable life. But, as animals are higher forms of life than vegetables, to kill animals is a greater violence than to kill vegetables. Therefore Hinduism teaches that vegetarianism is a higher way of life than meat-eating and describes the ideal saint as one who lives on air as it were (*vāyubhaksaka*) and who does no injury to animal or vegetable life in maintaining his bodily existence.

It is the practice of this cardinal virtue to the best of their ability that has made the Hindus what they are today. Most of their national virtues and probably also their weaknesses could be traced to the ideal of non-violence. Their mildness, their hospitality, their humanity, their horror of blood-

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as Nature is subject to unalterable laws, so is our moral nature also subject to law. Our characters and destinies shape themselves from life to life not according to the arbitrary decrees of an external God, but according to an organic law which is wrought into our natures. God, according to Hinduism, does not sit in judgment on us on some future day in thunder and lightning, but here and now and in us through the ordinary moral law,

Just as the law of cause and effect works in the physical world, the Law of Karma works in the moral world. For instance, whenever we put our hands into the fire we burn our fingers. Similarly, whenever a man steals, his character is affected for the worse. The more often he steals, the more thievish he becomes. On the other hand, whenever a man helps his neighbour, his character is affected for the better. The more often he helps, the more beneficent he becomes. The Law of Karma is only an extension of this invariable sequence that we see in life beyond the confines of the present life. It tells us that what we are at present is the result of what we thought and did in the past, and that what we shall be in the future will be the result of what we think and do now. On no other hypothesis can we explain the inequalities of life that we see all around us. God is not partial. He would not of His own accord make one man strong and another

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The Law of Karma recognizes both the elements of freedom and the elements that are pre-determined in our lives. Man's will is ever free, else moral life would be impossible. But its scope is somewhat limited by his birth, environment and natural tendencies. Every soul is like a farmer to whom a plot of land is given. The extent of the land, the nature of its soil, the changes of weather to which it is exposed are all pre-determined. But the farmer is quite at liberty to till the ground, to manure it and raise suitable crops or to neglect it and allow it to run to waste.

To make the operation of the Law of Karma clear Hindu scriptures divide a man's Karma into three parts—Prārabdha, Samcita and Āgāmi. Prārabdha karma is like an arrow which the archer has already discharged. It has left his hands. He cannot recall it. Therefore he must take the consequences of it. Samcita karma is like the arrow which he has set on the bowstring and is about to discharge. And Āgāmi karma is like the arrow in the quiver. Prārabdha karma is that part of a man's accumulated karma which has begun to bear fruit in his present life. It is a thing which is entirely determined and cannot be avoided. It gives rise to those conditions of a man's existence which he cannot get over, however hard he may try. We cannot, for instance, get over our sex or parentage

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allows his pupils to educate themselves by seeing the natural consequences of their actions, while he is always present to advise, to help and to save

Therefore the Law of Karma, far from filling us with despair, as some people think, fills us with hope. It teaches us that in the moral world there is nothing arbitrary. Just as a savage, who dreads a storm or an eclipse as a sign of the anger of the gods, ceases to dread it when he comes to know the laws of Nature, so when we come to know the Law of Karma we cease to dread the arbitrariness of chance, accident and luck in the realm of character. In a lawless universe our efforts would be futile. But in a realm where law prevails we feel secure and guide ourselves with the help of our knowledge. When we know that sin entails suffering, that what we are is the result of what we have done, that as we sow we shall reap and that our entire future will not be decided by what we do or fail to do in a single life, but that we shall be given as many chances to improve ourselves as we want, we are filled with hope. When we know that we are the architects of our own fortune and that it is never too late to amend, we feel strong and secure. We are glad we are not at the mercy of any capricious god. We are glad that we are not pre-destined to either eternal misery or eternal happiness by the arbitrary decree of an overruling

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him away from the realm where the Law of Karma operates. For behind the moral universe there is a spiritual universe where all differences are reconciled, all conflicts between good and evil cease and all our sins melt away in the Grace of God. As the physical world is subject to the law of causation and the moral world is subject to the Law of Karma, so the spiritual world is subject to the law of love. The Gītā teaches us that the spiritual progress of a man lies between two types of character—a Sakta and a Yukta. The former is one who works from attachment to the world. The latter is one who works out of love of God. Both of them work with zeal. But there is a world of difference in their motives and hence in the consequences of their actions. The work of the man of the world results in bondage, as all actions good and bad, when they are prompted by self-centred desires, bind the soul to the wheel of Saṁsāra, whereas the work of the man of God results in freedom, as all actions which are prompted by a desire to co-operate with God set free the soul. The Law of Karma does not bind Īśvara, though He works incessantly for the maintenance of law and order in the universe. If we take refuge in Him and act in concert with Him in everything we do, we escape from the realm of the Law of Karma or retributive action. The Gītā says —

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## CHAPTER V—HINDU SĀDHANAS.

As every one knows, religion is not a matter of mere rituals. Nor is it a matter of mere ethics. Morality is not religion, any more than the gateway to a temple is the temple itself. So moral life is not enough for the liberation of man. Hinduism, no doubt, insists on a man's acting according to his Dharma and acquiring purity of soul by leading a righteous life. But it also teaches us that in morality there is no completeness. The last word in the teaching of the Gītā is —

“Surrendering all Dharmas come unto Me alone for shelter”

For after every moral success we see a higher ideal which condemns once again our life of littleness and sin. Morality is like the horizon which ever recedes as we approach it. It always keeps us at arm's length and perpetually reminds us of our weaknesses. The unaided human soul feels that it is helpless and craves for something which will take it out of the region of perpetual conflict and give it the assurance of victory and peace. This is religion, where “ought” gives place to “is.” A merely moral life cannot give us the

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follows night, grace follows the cry of faith. The author of the Nārada-sūtras says:—

“Worship God at all times with all your heart and with all your mind Glorify Him in your heart, and He will soon reveal himself to you and you will feel His presence ”

And the Bhagavān of the Gītā says.—

“To those who are devoted to me and worship me do I give the steady mind by which they come to me Out of compassion for them do I dwell in their hearts and dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining lamp of wisdom.”

God reveals Himself to us in many ways. He takes on the form which we have chosen to worship. If we worship Him as Viṣṇu, He will come to us as Viṣṇu If we worship Him as Śiva, He will come to us as Śiva. If we worship Him as Devī, He will come to us as Devī Or if we choose to worship any of the Avatār forms, He will reveal Himself as such to the eye of faith To Tulsīdās and Rāmdās He appeared as Rama, to Vallabha and Caitanya He appeared as Kṛṣṇa, and to Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa He appeared as the Mother, Kālī The Gītā says.—

“Whatever be the form which a devotee seeks to worship with faith, I make his faith steadfast in that form alone ”

“Howsoever men approach me, even so do I accept them, for the path which men take on every side is mine, O Arjuna ”

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these strange growths. Even in a small homogeneous community it is difficult to find a uniform religious formula that would satisfy the needs of all minds. What satisfies the young may not satisfy the old. What satisfies the labourer may not satisfy the scholar. It is nothing short of violence to thrust all minds into the pigeon-hole of a single formula. The difficulty is increased a thousand-fold when the community is spread over a vast continent and includes different races with varying levels of culture and when there is no central institution to enforce uniformity. Every one of the races that came within the fold of Hinduism had its own gods, its own rites and ceremonies and its own methods of worship. Hinduism had the difficult task of reconciling all these and finding their greatest common measure. But fortunately the formula that had already been discovered by the Vedic sages—“*Ekam sat, viprā bahudhā vadantī*” (The Reality is one, but the wise speak of it in different ways)—was elastic enough to admit any number of gods into the Hindu Pantheon without doing violence to the deepest spiritual intuitions of the Aryan race. It is marvellous how amidst the conflicting claims of tribal deities and the clashing interests of different religious units and the confusing details of local customs and ceremonies the integrity of the Upaniṣadic revelation is maintained. Out of the process

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of God conceived in the past by the heart of man and recorded in the scriptures the worshipper is taught to choose one which satisfies his spiritual longing and make that the object of his adoration and love. This is said to be his *Ista-Devatā*. It may be Śiva or Viṣṇu or one of the *Avatārs* or one of the many forms of Śakti, the personification of the power of God. Or it may even be a tribal deity rendered concrete to the eye of the flesh by means of an image. For Hinduism freely encourages the use of images in worship, so that there may be something concrete round which men's devotions may centre.

An image serves the same purpose to the common people as a flag does to the army. It focusses men's devotions as a flag focusses men's martial valour. And just as every soldier who is prepared to lay down his life in defending his flag knows that in itself it is only a bit of painted cloth, but that it stands for something that he holds very dear, so every worshipper knows that the image in the temple is in itself a piece of wood or stone fantastically carved perhaps, but that it stands for something that he holds sacred and eternal. Hindu scriptures clearly say that the *pratīka* or the substitute is not God, but only a means of making the mind dwell on God. They point out that in this kind of *upāsana* or worship God Himself is the

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### III

Thus there are degrees of bhakti recognized in our scriptures. First of all, there is the broad division into Parā bhakti and Aparā bhakti—the higher bhakti and the lower bhakti. The former consists of meditation on the formless and unmanifested Brahman. It is the highest kind of bhakti of which only a few are capable. The Gītā says —

“The difficulty of those whose minds are set on the unmanifested is greater. For the path of the unmanifested is hard for the embodied to reach”

So, for those who find it hard to meditate on the unmanifested Brahman, the so-called lower bhakti or the love of the personal Īśvara is recommended. For the God of love is not the Absolute described as Sat-Cit-Ānanda by the philosopher and the mystic, but Īśvara, the highest manifestation of that Absolute vouchsafed to the human spirit. Thus the lower bhakti takes the path of least resistance and sails smoothly along the human currents of love and friendship and carries us safe to the harbours of God. But even this type of bhakti has several degrees. Though Śrīdhara, the learned commentator on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa says, that there are as many as eighty-one degrees,

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type of bhakti is that it may give rise to bigotry and cruelty towards those who have different conceptions of God and different methods of approach. The religious persecutions we read of in the history of Islam and Christianity are, of course, extreme illustrations of this intolerance. In fairness it must be said that the Hindu Ananya-bhakti has rarely resulted in such intolerance or iconoclastic zeal or religious massacres. For the Hindu monotheist has always recognized that the gods whom others worship are only different forms of his own Iṣṭa-Devatā.

Lastly, Ekānta-bhakti is the purest (sāttvika) type of bhakti. Here the worshipper loves God for His own sake and not for His gifts. In the other two types God is worshipped more for His gifts material and spiritual than for Himself. When we suffer from want, when we are in pain and sorrow and when death snatches away our dear ones, we naturally fly to Him for refuge and pray for the satisfaction of our wants as well as for comfort and consolation. But when once He is allowed to come into our hearts, the peace that He brings is so great that we gradually learn to crave for Him alone at all times in prosperity as well as adversity. In fact, when He comes to dwell in us, we become indifferent to external prosperity and adversity. His presence is our prosperity and His absence our greatest adversity. When He is present we can

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“ The yogin who, having attained to oneness, worships me abiding in all things—he lives in me, howsoever he leads his life ”

#### IV

The Hindu Bhakti-śāstras describe various forms of bhakti, interpreting the feeling of the worshipper towards the worshipped in terms of human relationship The most important of these forms are termed Dāśya-bhāva, Sakhya-bhāva, Vātsalya-bhāva, Śānta-bhāva, Kānta-bhāva and Madhura-bhāva When God is conceived as a person, the feeling of the worshipper towards Him may be, to start with, that of a servant to his master, as in the case of Hanumān in the Rāmāyana Such a type of bhakti is known as Dāśya-bhāva At a later stage it may be that of a man to his friend, as in the case of Kucela in the Bhāgavata Purāna Such a type of bhakti is known as Sakhya-bhāva Or it may be that of the parent to the child, as in the case of Yaśodā, the foster-mother of Kṛṣṇa Such a type of Bhakti is known as Vātsalya-bhāva. The opposite of this is Śānta-bhāva, the feeling of a child to its parent exemplified in Rāmakrishna Paramahansa's devotion to the goddess Kālī Or

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## V

Our Bhākti-śāstras not only analyse the degrees and forms of bhakti, but also describe the ways and means to it. They first describe the external means (Bahiranga sādhanā) and then the internal means (Antaranga sādhanā). To the former class belong offerings, vows, prostrations, the reading of sacred books, the chanting of hymns, the repeating of the Holy Name and the seeking of the grace of a Guru. In the later Bhakti schools of Rāmānanda, Tulsīdās, Vallabha, Nānak and Caitanya, the last two means, namely, repeating the Holy Name and seeking the grace of the Guru are considered of very great importance. The name of the Lord is said to be as important as His form. The mystic utterance is the mediator between God and man. It is a revelation in speech of the Ineffable and the Uncreated. Therefore meditation on the Name is calculated to fill the soul with devotion in the same way as the worship of an image fills the worshipper's heart. Similarly, the Guru also acts as a mediator. He guides us to the Lord by the path he has himself trodden. Books can only make us know about God. But a true Guru can make us know Him indeed through his own direct experience. So the kindness of a Guru is

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Next to renunciation comes *jñāna* or knowledge, among the internal means to *bhakti*. It is idle to dispute, as some sectarian teachers do, whether *jñāna* is subsidiary to *bhakti*, or *bhakti* is subsidiary to *jñāna*. It all depends upon the meaning we give to these words. There is a higher *jñāna* and a lower *jñāna*, as there is a higher *bhakti* and a lower *bhakti*. The higher *jñāna* is not different from the higher *bhakti*. The lower *jñāna* is the complement of the lower *bhakti*. Therefore it is included among the internal means of *bhakti*. Hinduism insists on progressive *bhakti*. It expects us to proceed from *Bāhya-bhakti* to *Ananya-bhakti* and thence to *Ekānta-bhakti* and finally to *Parā-bhakti*. While preaching toleration towards all

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The best way of gaining religious experience is through Upāsanā or the habit of inner worship. Our scriptures recommend that every kind of external worship should be followed by internal worship or contemplation. Chāndogya Upaniṣad says:—

“The sacrifice which one performs with knowledge, faith and contemplation becomes more powerful.”

This means that the mind of the worshipper should dwell for a time on the form of the deity worshipped and on the significance of the ritual gone through. When this is done for a sufficiently long time the deity becomes an abiding presence to the worshipper even without any ritual or image. The author of the Nārada Sūtras says in two most beautiful and unforgettable sūtras —

“Worship God at all times with all your heart and with all your mind. Glorify Him in your heart and He will soon reveal Himself to you and make you feel His presence.”

So in all types of Upāsanā the practice of feeling the presence of the deity worshipped is considered most important. There is no experience more thrilling than the feeling that when you withdraw from the world and meditate on God you are actually in His presence. When that experience comes, all that self-conscious weaving of words against a background of darkness which we call

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“ If in my mirth I showed no reverence to Thee while playing or resting, while sitting or eating, while alone or in the presence of others, Lord, I implore Thee who art infinite, to pardon me ”

If the Upāsaka never forgets the greatness and the glory and the eternal wisdom of his Lord, his prayer will ever be for light and more light. All other forms of prayer are only due to our ajñāna and our incurable feeling of self. Opening our hearts to the influence of God is a much more salutary act than opening our lips to make trivial petitions or raising our hands to beg for material gifts. For in such an act lie implicit our acquiescence and co-operation in all things that the Eternal Wisdom has planned for us. Therefore, though prayers for inferior things are not excluded from spiritual life, they should progressively, according to one's adhikāra, be made subsidiary to the attainment of jñāna which leads to moksa. That is why in the daily Upāsana of Gāyatrī we have primarily the meditation on the mystical Sun, the source of all light and life, and secondarily a prayer for the enlightenment of us all and no other petition.

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to systematize the practices of this technical yoga. He defined yoga as *citta-vṛtti-nirodha* or restraining the functions of the mind. But the practices themselves had been in vogue in this country since the Vedic period. The Upanisads mention them. The Buddhist and Jain scriptures approve of them and prescribe them. The Bhagavad Gītā recommends them. Therefore, all our later bhakti scriptures accept them as legitimate means of concentrating our minds on God. Thus there is practical unanimity on the part of all Indian teachers of religion as to the utility of yoga practices.

## VI

Patañjali's yoga is described as *astāṅga yoga* or yoga having eight accessories. In other words, we have eight kinds of mental and moral discipline, namely, *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. Only a brief explanation of these words can be attempted here. For fuller details the student has to read technical books on the subject.

The first two, *yama* and *niyama*, indicate the preliminary ethical preparation necessary for a yogin. *Yama* means abstention. The *sādhaka* or the student should abstain from slaughter, falsehood, theft, incontinence and possession. Of these abstentions the most important is the first. All

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every Hindu youth learns a few āsanās from a qualified teacher and practises them regularly for half an hour every day along with his prayers he will maintain perfect health and live to a ripe old age

The next step is prāṇāyāma or regulation of breath. Apart from being a means to concentration, prāṇāyāma is very beneficial to health. Respiratory exercises clear the lungs, steady the heart, purify the blood and tone up the whole nervous system. The yoga system realizes that the body is not a thing apart from the spirit, but its instrument and expression. Therefore it aims at perfecting the body as well as the mind and the spirit. There is a false notion among some people that yoga aims at torturing the body. Far from doing so, yoga tries to produce what is called *kāyasaṃpat* or the perfection of the body, which is said to consist in "beauty, grace, strength and the compactness of a thunderbolt."

Prāṇāyāma consists of three parts—*recaka* or breathing out, *pūraka* or breathing in and *kumbhaka* or holding the breath. In the simplest type of prāṇāyāma one of the nostrils, say the right, is closed, and after a preliminary breathing out, air is slowly drawn in through the left nostril, then both the nostrils are closed and the breath is held in for

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But there is one thing that is indispensable to every sādhanika and that is the grace of the Lord. We may practise all the external sādhanas and all the internal sādhanas without exception, we may steep ourselves in religious books and we may acquire the reputation of being pious men. But all these are of no avail without the grace of God. There is an oft-quoted verse in the Upanisads which says:—

“Not by study, not by intelligence and not by much learning is this Ātman to be obtained. It can be obtained only by him whom it chooses. To such a one the Ātman reveals its true nature.”

This does not mean that the grace of God is capricious. It only means that God is a searcher of hearts. We can deceive the world, we can deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive Him. He sees through all our pious prayers and our studied poses. He sees what sincerity there is in our hearts and sends His grace accordingly.

There is a difference of opinion among Hindu theistic teachers with regard to the co-operation of man's bhakti with God's prasāda or grace. Some hold that man's bhakti has to co-operate actively with God's grace for salvation. And they use a characteristically Indian figure to illustrate their doctrine. According to them, all bhaktas are like the young of a monkey which have to make an effort

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develops concentration of mind and attains to the ecstatic bliss in his love of God. He does not want to step out of his personality. He does not want to become one with the impersonal Absolute. As has been well said, he wants to taste sugar and not to become sugar. But there are other sād'hakas who want to go beyond this and realize the ultimate truth preached by Vedānta, namely, the essential identity of the devotee's soul with God. We shall see in the next chapter how Advaita Vedānta prescribes the path of jñāna for realizing this fundamental oneness. But there is a large body of scriptures known as the Tantras, which by means of pūjā (ritualistic worship), mantra (mystic utterance), yantra (mystic diagram), upāsana (contemplation of a concrete form) and yoga (mystic exercise) provide a graded course for rousing the mysterious coiled power (kundalinī) in man and making it pass through various stages on the way to the great cosmic consciousness, which the Upanisads describe as the goal of man. The Tāntric worship and exercises have influenced Hinduism and Buddhism through and through. This influence is felt from the lowest village worship of Grāma-devatā to the highest Devī-upāsana of great Advaitins like Śaṅkara. It has penetrated even to such purely Vedic ritual as that of meditation on the Gāyatrī mantra in Sandhyā vandana. The

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has to be prescribed for every individual by a qualified Guru. If the pūjā of the goddess is intelligently done with the appropriate mantra, yantra, mudrā and upāsanā under the guidance of a Guru, the mystic power called Kundalinī which lies coiled at the base of the spinal cord (suṣumnā) will be roused. Gradually it will go up and pierce the six cakras or mystic nerve centres in the body. Each of these cakras is conceived to be in the form of a symbolic lotus. They are supposed to be arranged in the following order in the human body —

(1) The first cakra is the Mūlādhāra in the pelvic region. It is conceived as a lotus with four petals. Here dwells the mystic power, Kundalinī. In all ordinary men it lies dormant like a sleeping serpent.

(2) The second cakra is the Svādhistāna a little above Mūlādhāra in the groin. It is conceived as a lotus with six petals.

(3) The third cakra is the Manipura at the navel. It is conceived as a lotus with ten petals.

(4) The fourth cakra is the Anāhata situated in the heart. It is conceived as a lotus with twelve petals.

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or believe in the supernormal powers (siddhis) which a yogin acquires incidentally on his way to Mokṣa or liberation? And yet these powers are a matter of fairly common experience in all parts of India even today. There are hundreds of sādḥakas, some of them common householders in humble walks of life, who are able to verify from their own experience all the wonderful sights and all the wonderful sounds that are described as siddhis in our ancient yoga treatises.

It must be confessed, at the same time, that there is a good deal of fraud and licentiousness connected with some at least of the forms of Tāntric sādḥana and their siddhis. Also it cannot be denied that by its very intensity the Tāntric ritual may lead to a grossly anthropomorphic conception of Śakti or the power of God. But it is unfair to judge the use of a thing by the abuse of it. With a knife a man can cut his throat as well as his bread. On that account we do not condemn knives in general. Only we do not put them into the hands of children. There is no doubt that the system of Tāntric sādḥana taken as a whole, with the prescribed safeguards and a recognition of its dangers and limitations, is a powerful lever for lifting up the soul to higher levels of consciousness. It was so used by men like Śaṅkarācārya and Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa.

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## CHAPTER VI—HINDU PHILOSOPHY

Hindu philosophy is not mere speculation or guess work, but organized doctrine based on mystic experience. The subjects it deals with may, for our purposes, be classified thus—God and His creation, and man and his salvation. There are several schools of philosophy—all based on the Śruti—which deal with these subjects. We have the systems of Śamkara, Bhāskara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Viśnusvāmī, Nimbārka, Vallabha and Caitanya and the two schools, Northern and Southern, of Śaivism. But we will confine ourselves here to the Advaita of Śamkara, the Viśistādvaita of Rāmānuja, the Dvaita of Madhva and the Śaiva Siddhānta of Meykandar.

### I

The first systematic exponent of the Advaita is, Gaudapāda, who is said to have lived about the beginning of the eighth century A. D. His pupil was Govinda, who afterwards became the teacher of Śamkara. Śamkara flourished in the first half of the ninth century and has left behind him a

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end of the first ascent we see that morality is not enough, and at the end of the second we see that worship is not enough either. For religious experience, in the narrow sense of the term, is not the highest experience that man is capable of. In all devotional life there is the same implication of duality as in ethical life. Just as in ethical life there is a perpetual distinction between the ideal and the actual, so in devotional life there is a perpetual distinction between a perfect God and an imperfect soul. And, as long as there is such a distinction, we may take it that the goal has not been reached. But in jñāna or mystic consciousness, which great Rsis acquire after a prolonged life or lives of self-abnegation and prayer and spiritual quest, there is no such distinction. In this experience, as in God, knowing and being are one. In other words, man knows God by partaking of His nature and becoming divine.

It is unfortunate that there is no English word exactly corresponding to jñāna and that in Sanskrit also the word is used both for intellectual knowledge and for spiritual realization. Jñāna in the higher sense is both knowledge of, and life in, God. When our jñāna-caksus or the eye of wisdom is opened we see ourselves as part and parcel of an abounding divine life of which no tongue of man can speak adequately. Our world of time and space then

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Upanisads that the only adequate description of God is a series of negatives—*neti, neti*, not this, not this. In other words, any statement that we, poor finite beings living in time and space, can make of Him, who is infinite and eternal, must fall infinitely short of the reality. Therefore, after ascribing to Him the highest qualities and virtues that we can think of, we have to add, "Not simply these, but something far higher and far different."

This so-called Nirguna conception or the conception of an unqualified Absolute has been wrongly described as agnosticism by some foreign critics. Scientific agnosticism disclaims all knowledge of spiritual existence, whether God or soul. Agnostics say that behind the physical life of the world there may be a God and that behind the mental life of man there may be a soul, but that both of them are unknowable. They say that our knowledge is confined to the field of matter and energy or merely energy, for all matter has now been reduced to energy. But Hinduism does not say that God is unknowable in this sense. On the other hand, it teaches that God is not only infinitely higher than ourselves, but also infinitely near to ourselves. He is nearer to us than our hands and feet, For He is the soul of our souls. He lives in our hearts. He is the canvas on which we shine as painted pictures. He is the very ground of our being. But for His

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same sun is blazing in the sky. Similarly the Absolute in itself is called Brahman. The Absolute in relation to the world or viewed through human spectacles is Īśvara. In other words, Īśvara is the best image of Brahman that we can possibly get under human conditions of knowledge. It is the only way in which the Absolute can appear to the human mind. Hence Īśvara is a personal God, while Brahman is supra-personal Being. Usually personality implies the existence of some other beings differentiated from the person referred to. Therefore it can belong only to one who stands in some relation to others beside himself. Such a condition cannot obviously apply to the Absolute, the All. There can be nothing outside it and differentiated from it. The Absolute is not a person standing over against other persons. It is the unifying principle behind all persons. Therefore it is only when we conceive of God in relation to the world as its creator, sustainer and destroyer that we can speak of the personality of God. A more correct expression than personality of God, if by God we mean Brahman and not Īśvara, is probably personality *in* God. The man in the street generally imagines God as simply a glorified man. As a man eats, enjoys, fights and marries, so does his God eat, enjoy, fight and marry. As a man brings up a

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pushed forward and tried to see God as He is, and not simply as He is to us. The former is called Brahman, and the latter Īśvara. Though strictly nothing could be asserted of Brahman in human terms, the formula *sat-cit-ānanda* is employed to indicate the mystery of mysteries. *Sat* means existence, *cit* means consciousness, and *ānanda* means bliss. The whole formula simply means that the Absolute exists, that it is pure consciousness and that it is perfect. In other words, the Absolute is a spiritual perfection.

It will be seen that in the Absolute indicated by the Hindu formula of *sat-cit-ānanda* there is no mention of moral attributes. For morality which involves an antithesis between good and evil is on a lower plane. Moral good is called good only when it is in the process of formation. But when it is fully formed, it ceases to be good owing to the absence of evil. It can only be called perfection, which we indicate by the word 'ānanda'. That is why we say that the Absolute is beyond good and evil.

Evil is real to us, but not to God as He is in Himself. It is inherent in the world. For it is the opposition of the finite to the infinite. Hindu philosophers call the latter Ātman and the former Anātman. To them the universe is a battlefield where there is perpetual war between these two.

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“ She is the vestal virgin consecrated to the service of immortal perfection, and when she takes her place before the altar of the infinite, she casts off her dark veil and bares her face to the beholder as a revelation of supreme joy ”

Thus what appears to us as the inseparable dualism of Ātman and Anātman or subject and object in creation is derived from the Absolute. It seems to be the nature or the pleasure (Līlā) of the Absolute to manifest itself in the world as the inseparable two, just as it is an artist's nature or pleasure to manifest himself in a work of art. For no other motive can be ascribed to God without impairing His perfection. In other words, He has nothing to attain which He has not already attained. He has nothing to desire which He does not already possess. But at the same time we cannot identify Him with the universe in which He manifests Himself any more than we can identify a work of art with an artist. God is, no doubt, immanent in the world, but He is also transcendent. His immanence does not mean that He is to be totally identified with the world any more than His transcendence means that He is to be totally separated from the world.

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It is difficult to say how this changing, finite world of ours first came into existence, and how exactly it is related to the unchanging infinite God. As a wise man once said, the way of ascent from the world to God is revealed to us, and that is enough for our purpose. We need not bother ourselves with the way of descent from God to the world, which is not revealed to us. Scriptures are intended to be guides to a diviner life and not to be text-books of science dealing with the origin of life and matter. To understand the world around us we are endowed with senses and reason. It is, therefore, to understand God, and not the world, that we require the help of scriptures. Accordingly, exercising their own reason, different Indian thinkers have put forward different theories of creation. The most important of these are the so-called Āraṁbha-vāda, Parīnāma-vāda and Vivarta-vāda.

The theory of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school of philosophers is known as Āraṁbha-vāda. According to it, at the beginning of a kalpa or aeon invisible and intangible atoms of different kinds unite under the influence of the will of God and the destiny of souls to form the various objects of the world differing in their qualities from the atoms themselves. Thus the effect produced is entirely different from the cause. A new object comes into

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of sound, touch, smell, form and taste, (4) *manas* or the mind, (5) the five organs of cognition, (6) the five organs of action and, finally, (7) the five gross elements of ether, air, light, water and the earth. The evolving *Prakṛti* is in itself blind and unconscious, but all its activities are purposive, their fulfilment being the fruition of the destiny of souls. At the end of a *kalpa* the world is dissolved and the three *gunas* of *Prakṛti* come into equilibrium again.

The *Sāṃkhya* theory is an improvement on that of *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*. For it postulates only two ultimate realities. Again, while according to the *Nyāya* theory, as we have seen, the effect is different from the cause, according to the *Sāṃkhya* theory the effect is inherent in the cause. The world is inherent in *Prakṛti*. It is only made manifest by evolution, as oil is made manifest when the oil-seed is pressed.

Finally, *Vivarta-vāda* is a theory of appearance and reality. According to some schools of *Vedānta*, the cause without undergoing any change in itself can produce the effect. In the two analogies given above, threads have to be woven together to produce cloth, and oil-seeds have to be pressed for oil to come out. In both these cases the cause undergoes a change. So these analogies will not do to explain creation in which the Creator remains unaffected.

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We should guard ourselves here against a misconception. As Hindu philosophers use the word *Māyā* to explain the connection between God and the world, many people have come to believe that they teach that the world is an illusion. As a matter of fact, it was not Hindu philosophers but some Buddhist philosophers that taught that the world was unreal. And their opinions were condemned by the Hindus as heretical. No orthodox Vedic school ever supported the theory of illusionism, according to which nothing exists really outside our minds. On the other hand, we distinguish three stages in Hindu philosophy in the treatment of this question of the reality of the world. The first stage of development is seen in the theories of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school which analysed the facts of the world and reduced them into a number of *padārthas* or categories. The second stage of development is seen in the theories of Sāṃkhya-Yoga school which further reduced them to the two well-known categories of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*. The third stage of development is seen in the theories of the various schools of Vedānta which tackle the question whether it is possible to reduce the two into one. The systems of Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka and Vallabha teach that the world is real, but dependent upon God in one way or another. Thus one of the two categories is made subordinate to the other,

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higher order of reality than the former. The dramatist belongs to a higher order of reality than his characters. From his standpoint the characters are only ideal creations, but from the standpoint of the characters themselves they are all real. Similarly, from the standpoint of God we and the world in which we live may be only ideal, but among ourselves and relatively to one another we are terribly real. The world is there external to our minds. But there is nothing external to the mind of God. Our scriptures, no doubt, describe the world sometimes as a dream. But to whom is it a dream? A dream is no dream to the dreamer. It is a terrible reality to him. It is only to the awakened man that it is a dream. Similarly, it is not to the man of the world, but to the yogin in his *saṁādhi*, when he identifies himself with the changeless Reality, that the world fades and vanishes. We are all of us in a world which is real to us, but we aspire to the attainment of a world which the Veda reveals to us and in which this will-o'-the-wisp of a world, with its deceits and lies, its mockeries and temptations, will not bewilder us any further. Therefore, the word *Māyā* used by Hindu philosophers in this connection does not mean illusion. It rather means a mystery. *Māyā* is the mysterious power by which God, while remaining changeless Himself, gives rise to this changing phenomenal

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tual insight each soul imagines that it is separate from other souls and separate from God

At the centre of every soul there is the same divine spark. The Ātman, when it is clothed in upādhis, which mean the moral, mental and physical limitations of the individual, becomes the Jīva. Jīvas are separate from one another as islands in the ocean. Islands in the ocean appear as separate places with different physical features and with different fauna and flora. But we know that deep down in the ocean they are all connected together by land. Without that internal connection they could never stand. So also individual souls. For all practical purposes each individual is a separate unit. He is a moral agent. He sins and falls. He does good and is raised. As he sows, he reaps—either in this world or in the next. But his salvation lies in his finally transcending his individuality.

We know as much even from our everyday lives. At first sight, we all seem to be rigidly apart from one another. But we are able to understand one another, love one another and enter into one another's minds. This sense of unity raised to the maximum constitutes the mystic vision of the living unity of all creation, of which the scriptures speak. It is not, therefore, the existence of the individual soul that is denied by our highest scriptures, but

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rateness, By righteousness, by love and spiritual insight a man has to go out of himself and feel the oneness of all beings in God, And this feeling should become not a mere passing emotion, but an abiding possession. Then the scales fall from his eyes, the vision of God comes to him and he realizes the truth of the mahāvākyas of the Śruti. This is his moksa or liberation. As it is an eternal state, it is not something that is, strictly speaking, attained, but something that is only realized. It is the awakening of the soul into the divine life and coming into its own. The Upanisad says —

“ He who truly knows the Supreme Brahman becomes Brahman ”

There is nothing to prevent a man from reaching this state even in this life. A man who has reached that state in this life is called a Jīvanmukta. By the great experience of Samyaktarśana the effects of his former karma are destroyed except the small fraction of prārabdha which has come to fruition in the present body. He remains in the body till the effects of this are over. As his present actions are the outcome not of his own individual desire, but of his service to God, they bear no seeds of future lives, and as his devotions are the outcome not of any impassable gulf between him and God, but of his close and constant association with Him, they need no further life of probation, So a

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But it is only very rarely that a man attains to moksa while he is still living on earth, and becomes one with God after death. What happens to most men after death is that they soon come back into this world of time and change and take birth in surroundings suitable to their further progress. In other words, their past karma good and bad determines for them their environment, such as their country, nation, class, parentage, etc. This process or path is technically called *Pitr-Yāna*. Those, however, who have not only done good works, but also loved God with a self-forgetting love, do not come back, but live in a world of spirit called *Brahmaloka*. There they abide with more than human faculties in the presence of God whom they worshipped on earth and gradually attain moksa or mukti. This process or path is technically called *Devayāna*, and the mukti obtained, being gradual, is called *Krama-mukti*.

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The Bhāgavatas had their own scriptures called the Pāñcarātra Āgamas which expounded the cult of Vāsudeva and which were therefore looked upon by them as being equal to the Upanisads. Their religion was one based on God's grace to erring humanity. It therefore greatly emphasized the doctrine of Avatāra or incarnation and popularized the immortal stories which were afterwards collected together in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Harivamśa and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

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Rāmānuja's system is best studied in his Vedānta Sangraha, his commentary on the Gītā, and, above all, in his Śrī Bhāṣya, which is a commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras. It is a theistic system which, with its insistence on the personality of God and His loving-kindness to men and the ultimate reality of the human soul and the world, is calculated to satisfy the religious instincts of humanity more than the pure philosophy of Saṃkara.

According to Rāmānuja, the Absolute is not impersonal, but a personality endowed with all the glorious qualities we know of, such as omniscience, omnipotence and boundless love. So God is *saguna* only, and not *nirguna*. The Vedic texts which deny qualities to Him should be interpreted as meaning that He has no such lower qualities as sorrow, change, mortality, etc. The plurality that is involved in the idea of the personality of God exists in Himself. For He has two inseparable

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Salvation can be obtained only through the grace of God responding to the call of bhakti and by means of prapatti or absolute self-surrender. Karma and jñāna are only means to bhakti. The released souls attain to the nature of God and never to identity with Him. They remain atomic in size and dependent on God. They live in fellowship with Him either serving Him or meditating on Him. Thus they never lose their individuality. They are only released from samsāra. And, as this release comes, if at all, only after quitting the body, there is no such thing as Jīvanmukti according to Rāmānuja.

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According to this system the supreme Reality is Śiva He is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, eternal, changeless, free and perfect But above all he is Love—the only quality that we can comprehend His infinite love reveals itself in the five divine acts of the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe (in accordance with the Law of Karma) and the obscuration and liberation of souls (in accordance with Grace) Śiva acts through His Śakti, which is conscious energy While He is pure consciousness, and matter is pure unconsciousness, Śakti is the intermediate link between the two The universe which undergoes evolution for the benefit of souls is real and eternal The Śaiva Siddhānta analyses it into thirty-six tattvas or principles, as against the twenty-five of the

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The Dvaita system of Madhvācārya was developed in the early decades of the thirteenth century. It is an unqualified dualism. Madhva insists on what he calls the five great distinctions—(1) that God is distinct from the individual souls, (2) that He is distinct from matter, (3) that the individual souls are distinct from matter, (4) that the souls are distinct from one another and (5) that one part of matter is distinct from another.

His philosophy is best studied in his two commentaries on the Vedānta Sūtras, his commentaries on the Upanisads and the Bhagavad Gītā and his glosses on the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The centre of his religion is the worship of Kṛṣṇa as taught in the Bhāgavata, and his philosophy has many points in common with that of Rāmānuja.

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Other systems of philosophy which similarly emphasize Bhakti and which centre round the worship of Viṣṇu or His great incarnation, Kṛṣṇa, are those of Viṣṇusvāmī, Nimbārka, Vallabha and Caitanya.

While Viṣṇusvāmī's system is dualistic like Madhva's, Nimbārka's system is known as Dvaita-advaita or dualistic monism because he holds that the relation of God to the soul and the world is one of identity in difference (bheda-abheda). The soul and the world are different from God since they possess qualities different from those of God. At the same time they are not different from God, since God is omnipresent and they depend entirely

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In the foregoing pages a very brief account has been given of the essentials of a religion which, though it is the oldest in the world, is as vigorous today as any other religion. An attempt has been made to show that Hinduism is neither fatalism nor pessimism, neither asceticism nor quietism, neither agnosticism nor pantheism, neither illusionism nor mere polytheism, as some of its hasty critics in foreign countries have represented it to be. It is a synthesis of all types of religious experience from the lowest to the highest. It is a whole and complete view of life. That is why it has stood all these thousands of years and survived the attacks of the followers of the other great religions of the world. It has survived the Buddhist schism of ancient times, the Muslim opposition of mediaeval times and the Christian propaganda of modern times. And today in the twentieth century, the age of Gāndhī and Tagore, it is again in one of its periods of Renaissance.

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The present Renaissance was preceded by a dark period of a century and a half in which nothing creative in religion, literature or art was done. But from about 1830 we see a faint glimmer caused by the agitation led by Rām Mohun Roy, the founding of the Brāhmo Samāj, the starting of the New Universities and the translations of Sanskrit texts by Orientalists. In fact, we may look upon the second and the third quarters of the last century as a period of twilight in which new forces of a far-reaching character begin to shape themselves. Then in the last quarter we have the dawn signalized by the growth of such powerful indigenous institutions as the Indian National Congress, the Ārya Samāj and the Rāmakrishna Mission. And, finally, in the early years of the present century, along with the awakening of the Asiatic nations symbolized by the victory of Japan over Russia came the sunrise of Indian Nationalism and with it a Renaissance of Hinduism.

But the present Renaissance differs from those that preceded it in several respects. Firstly, India is no longer isolated from the world. The political and social forces that are moving the minds of men in Europe and America are reaching Indian shores

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social injustice and tyranny. Great insight and wise statemanship are required to direct these new forces properly and develop a type of religion that would satisfy the demands of the hour. But the hour has already found its man. Under the wise guidance of Mahātmā Gāndhī, Hinduism is exorcising the demon of untouchability and putting its house in order and even delivering a message to mankind.

## II

The soul of Hinduism has ever been the same, though it has had different embodiments in different ages. From the foregoing pages it will be seen that the Hindu teachers of all ages and schools of thought have insisted on certain fundamentals which may be expressed in modern terms thus —

1 That our ultimate authority in religion is neither a miraculous revelation nor individual reason, neither the teaching of any Founder nor mere tradition, but the spiritual experience of a host of seers which every man can make his own by undergoing the necessary discipline

2 That, as there is a law of causation in the physical world, there is a law of consequences called the Law of Karma in the moral world, according to which a man reaps as he sows, his present life being determined by the past and his future by the present

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The question now is—how far will Hinduism be able in the present age and amidst new forces to preserve its soul, maintain its individuality, conserve its strength and at the same time satisfy the deepest aspirations of the modern spirit? For it is only when a religion meets all these demands that it can justify its existence and claim a spiritual sanction for its disciplinary rules and regulations. It is only when Hinduism is shown to be able to stand these tests that the present Renaissance can be said to have fulfilled its purpose

### III

We all know that Hinduism in India has often been brought into discredit in various ways. True religion should always strengthen morality and never outrage our moral sense. Therefore when demands are made in the name of religion, which outrage our moral sense or which are inconsistent with the fundamental laws of humanity, we must resist them with all our might, however high may be the scriptural authority quoted in defence of them. We know how scriptures have been quoted in favour of many an inhuman or immoral practice—

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for many a crime against humanity, such as forcible conversions, religious persecutions, inquisitions and massacres. Again, religious zeal has often made itself a nuisance and a danger to the commonweal, when those who are actuated by it begin to interfere with the liberty of others or disturb public peace. Especially in a country like ours, where men of different religions have to live side by side, it is very necessary that the religion we profess should be entirely free from fanaticism and that it should make for unity, peace and brotherhood. Religion has been and still is so much the cause of strife and dissension in India that there are some among us who think that it should be entirely divorced from politics, that we should be Indians first before we are Hindus or Christians or Muslims. There is a good deal to be said for this view in a country where religion too often spells hatred not love, bigotry not enlightenment, and contraction of the heart and the mind not expansion.

But I think this is a rather short-sighted view. The separation of the spiritual and secular spheres would only lead to inanition in the former and chaos in the latter. The natural life of man, when the direction of the supernatural is removed, does not remain natural, it becomes unnatural. To illustrate this truth we have only to look at the present state of Europe. We meet with the opposite extreme

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Fortunately for us in India at the present day, we have a concrete illustration of this fruitful alliance between true religion and politics in the life and work of Mahātmā Gāndhī. He once wrote—

“ For me there is no politics without religion—not the religion of the superstitious and the blind, the religion that hates and fights, but the universal religion of toleration ”

Again, writing in *Harijan* at the beginning of 1937, he describes what he calls the square of Swarāj with four right angles, *viz*, political independence and economic independence on one side and morality and religion on the other. And he says that all morality is summed up in Non-violence, and all religion in Truth. No greater message could be delivered to us. It is a message not only to India, but also to the world

The world is in travail to-day, and we may shortly witness the birth of a new order. Let us hope that in that order the fruits of the earth and all the good things of life will be distributed more equitably among the nations of the world and also among the classes and individuals of each nation. But man lives not by bread alone. Mere material

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### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GAYATRI MANTRA.

*Aum, bhūrbhuvassuṣah, tatsaviturvarenyam,  
bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo nah pracodayāt.*

*The Eternal pervades the earth and heaven  
and all that lies between    On His adorable and  
divine radiance we meditate    May He prompt our  
minds!*

The Gāyatrī mantra, which derives its name from its metre, may be said to contain the essence of Hindu philosophy in the form of a common prayer. At the very outset, in its so-called Vyāhrtis, it recognizes that the Supreme Spirit, designated by Aum, is immanent in the universe—in all the worlds known to us. We know that in the universe all things obey what we call the laws of Nature. In other words, they automatically obey the commands of God. The revolutions of the planets and stars, the recurrence of seasons, the growth and decay of trees, the ripening of corn and the behaviour of birds and beasts—all are subject to the will of the immanent God. But there is a single exception to this common rule. And that is the mind of man. In this domain alone the divine Law is kept in abeyance. For man is endowed with a will of his own. He alone has the freedom in

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## GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT WORDS

### A

*Adharma*, unrighteousness  
*Adhikāra*, spiritual competence  
*Advaita* monism  
*Āgama*, scripture (sectarian)  
*Āgāmīkarma*, results of actions to be experienced in future  
*Āhamkāra*, ego-consciousness  
*Ahimsā*, non-violence  
*Ajñā*, nerve centre between the eye-brows  
*Ajñāna*, ignorance  
*Anāhata*, nerve centre near the heart  
*Ananda*, bliss  
*Ananya-bhakti*, exclusive devotion  
*Ānātman*, non-self, object  
*Anava*, small, finite  
*Aurvacanīya*, indescribable.  
*Annam*, matter, food  
*Annaprāśana*, the ceremony of giving solid food to a child for the first time.  
*Antaranga-sādhana*, internal means  
*Anu*, atomic  
*Aparā-bhakti*, lower kind of devotion  
*Arambha-vāda*, theory about the beginning of creation  
*Ārcāvatāra*, image worshipped as an Avatar  
*Arghyam*, respectful offering of hospitality  
*Artha*, wealth  
*Āsana*, seat, posture  
*Asanga*, detachment

*Aṣṭāṅga*, having eight limbs or parts

*Āśrama*, stage of life  
*Ātman*, soul, self, spirit  
*Āvāhana*, invocation  
*Avatāra*, incarnation  
*Avidyā*, nescience

### B

*Baddha*, soul still subject to births and deaths

*Bahiranga-sādhana*, external means

*Bāhya*, external

*Bāhya-bhakti*, external devotion

*Bhagavān*, Lord

*Bhāgavatās*, a school of devotees of Viṣṇu

*Bhakti*, devotee

*Bhakti*, devotion

*Bhakti-yoga*, union through devotion

*Bhedābheda*, identity in difference

*Bhūta-yañña*, the daily rite of feeding animals

*Bodhisattva*, Buddhist saint

*Brahmacarya*, the stage of a student

*Brahma-loka*, the world of God

*Brahman*, the Absolute

*Bṛāhmanas*, ritualistic treatises

*Brahma-randhira*, the aperture in the crown of the head through which the liberated soul is said to escape

*Brahma-yañña*, study of the scriptures, as worship.

*Buddhi*, understanding,

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*Karma-kāṇḍa*, Vedic sections dealing with rituals  
*Karma-yoga*, union through active service  
*Krama-mukti*, graded salvation  
*Kriyā*, rites  
*Krodha*, anger  
*Kṣatriya*, warrior-caste  
*Kumbhaka*, temporary stoppage of breath in *Prāṇāyāma*  
*Kuṇḍalinī*, mysterious nerve power in man

## L

*Leela*, the pleasure of the Lord  
*Linga*, emblem  
*Lobha*, greed

## M

*Mada*, pride  
*Madhura-bhāva*, the mutual feeling of lovers  
*Mādhyāhṇika*, prayer offered at noon  
*Mahat*, cosmic intellect  
*Mahā-vākya*, a great Vedic text  
*Manana*, thinking  
*Manas*, mind, consciousness  
*Mānasaika*, mental  
*Manipūra*, the nerve centre at the navel  
*Mantra*, sacred formula  
*Manuṣya-yajña*, the rite of offering hospitality  
*Mātsarya*, spite  
*Māyā*, illusion, mystery  
*Mīmāṃsā*, Vedic exegetics  
*Mithyā-jñāna*, false knowledge  
*Moha*, delusion  
*Mokṣa*, liberation  
*Mūḍha-bhakti*, blind faith  
*Mudrā*, mystic gesture  
*Mukta*, liberated soul  
*Mūlādhāra*, nerve centre in the pelvic region

## N

*Naimittika-karma*, occasional rite

*Navedyam*, offerings to God  
*Nāmakarana*, ceremony of giving a name to the newborn child  
*Nārāyaṇīya*, chapter dealing with Narayana  
*Nididhyāsana*, meditating  
*Nirājana*, the ceremony of waving a light before the deity that is worshipped  
*Nirguna*, without qualities  
*Nirvāṇa*, beatitude  
*Nishkāma-karma*, disinterested action

*Nitya*, eternal  
*Nitya-karma*, obligatory rite  
*Niyama*, abstention  
*Nyāsa*, ceremonial assignment of parts of body to the deities worshipped,  
*Nyāya*, school of logic

## P

*Padārtha*, element  
*Pādyan*, water offered for washing one's feet  
*Pāñcarātra-āgama*, the scripture of a school of Vaishnavas  
*Parā-bhakti*, higher kind of devotion  
*Paramātman*, supreme spirit, the Absolute Self  
*Paratantra*, dependent entity  
*Pārāyana*, ceremonial reading of scripture every day  
*Parmāma-vāda*, evolution theory  
*Pāśa*, bond  
*Paśu*, technical term for soul in Saiva Siddhanta  
*Patī*, Lord  
*Piṭr-tarpana*, libations of water to the manes  
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*Piṭryāna*, the path by which the dead return to take birth again  
*Prabandha*, collection of hymns.  
*Pradhāna*, primal matter.

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*Prabandha*, collection of hymns  
*Pradhāna*, primal matter.

*Śivatva*, nature of Śiva,  
*Smṛti* secondary scripture, code of law  
*Snānam* bathing, ablution.  
*Sodhana*, purification  
*Śrāddha*, annual ceremony in honour of the dead  
*Sravaṇa*, hearing or learning the sacred texts  
*Śrī-vidyā*, the science of rousing kuṇḍalinī taught in the Tantras  
*Śruti*, revealed scripture, Veda  
*Sthūla*, gross  
*Sūdra*, the fourth caste in the Hindu caste system  
*Sūkṣma*, subtle  
*Suṣumnā*, spinal column  
*Sūtra*, aphorism  
*Suvarṇapuṣpa*, offering of gold or money  
*Svādhiṣṭhāna*, nerve centre in the groin  
*Svārāt* a free spirit  
*Svatantra*, independent being

## T

*Tamas*, dullness, one of the three fundamental qualities of matter  
*Tāmbūlam*, offering betel  
*Tanmātra*, category (in the Sankhya system)  
*Tantra*, sectarian scripture of the Śākta school, ritual  
*Tattva*, true nature  
*Trimūrti*, trinity

## U

*Ubhaya-vedāntin*, he who is proficient in both Sanskrit and Tamil schools of philosophy  
*Uddharana*, uplift  
*Upacāra*, service  
*Upadesa*, initiation,  
*Upādhi*, limitation

*Upanayana* investiture with the sacred thread  
*Upaniṣad*, mystic teaching.  
*Upāsūka*, worshipper  
*Upāsana* inner worship  
*Upāsana-kāṇḍa*, Vedic sections dealing with inner worship or meditation

## V

*Vairāgya*, renunciation  
*Vaiśeṣika*, one of the schools of philosophy  
*Vaiṣṇava*, belonging to Viṣṇu  
*Vaisya* the third caste in the Hindu caste system  
*Vaivarta-vāda*, theory of appearance and reality  
*Vānaprastha*, the third stage of life, a recluse  
*Varna*, caste  
*Varnāśrama-dharma*, the law of castes and stages of life  
*Vastrapam*, vestments  
*Vātsalya-bhāva* parental feeling  
*Vāyubhakṣaka*, one who lives on air  
*Veda*, scripture, sacred book of divine knowledge  
*Vedānta* the school of philosophy based on the concluding sections of the Veda.  
*Vibhu*, all-pervasive  
*Vidyā*, right knowledge  
*Vidyārambha*, the ceremony of teaching the alphabet  
*Vijātma*, one who has conquered himself  
*Viñāna*, understanding  
*Viśarjana*, bidding farewell to a deity after worship  
*Viśiṣṭādvaita*, the philosophy of Rāmānuja, organic monism  
*Viśuddhātma*, one who has purified himself  
*Viśva-rūpa*, cosmic form  
*Vivāha*, marriage

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Mīmāṃsā 24, 26, 27.

Mohammed, 6

Mythology, 52-54.

## N

Nānak, 112.

Nārada-Sūtras, 99, 100, 109, 116, 117.

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